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"Let no man despise thee."

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DISCOURSE

TO

THE GRADUATING CLASS

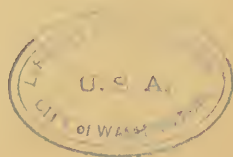
OF

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.

GETTYSBURG, SEPTEMBER 16TH, 1855,

BY H. L. BAUGHER.

Published by the Class.



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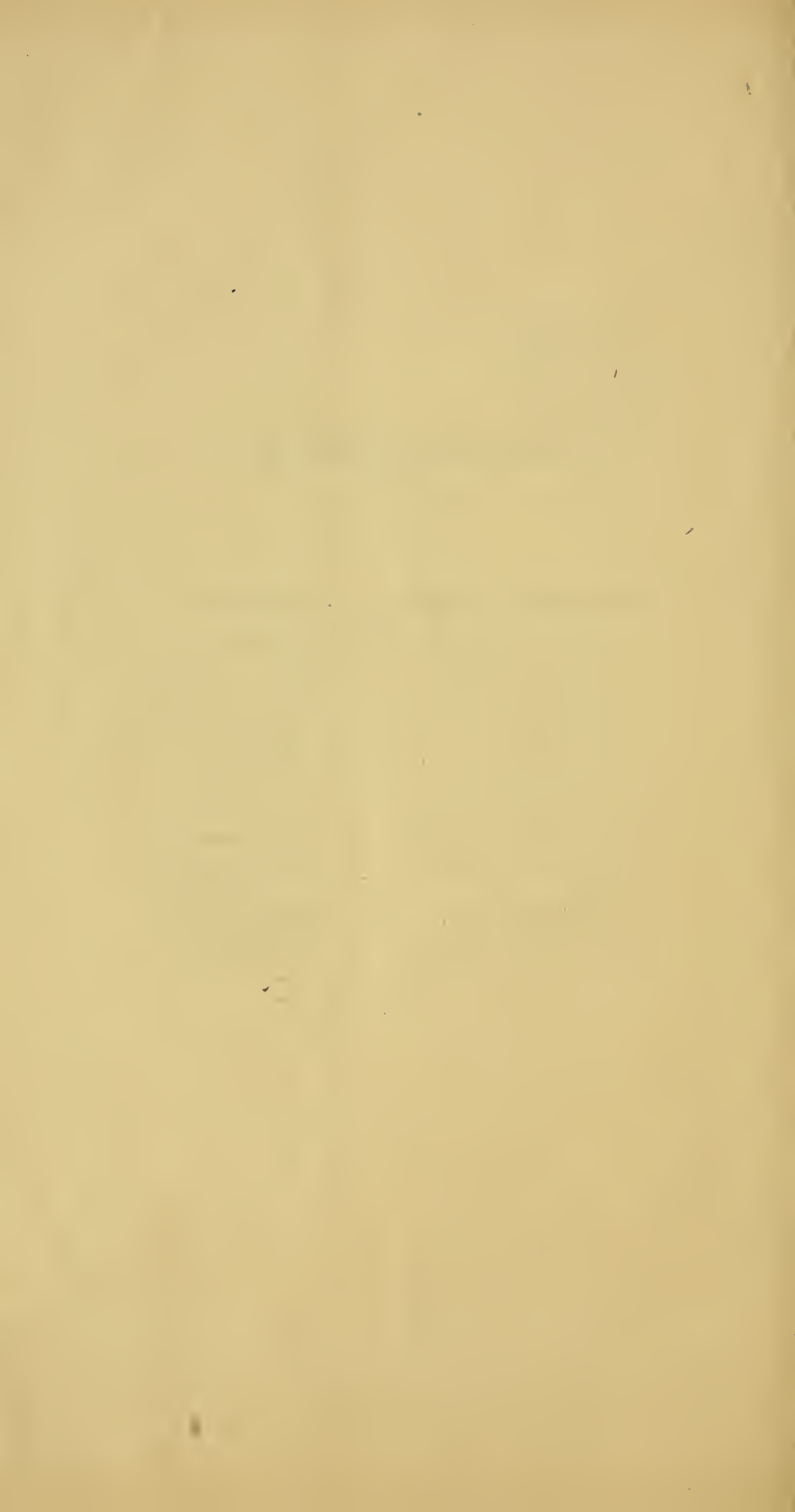
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1855

GRADUATES FOR 1855.

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DISCOURSE.

Titus 2: 15 (last clause).—"Let no man despise thee."

THE feeling of contempt, in whatever degree it may be cherished, is never the result of misfortune or affliction, but of conduct. It is not the poor man who is despised, or the deformed, or the bereaved, whether of friends, or possessions, or reason, these are pitied and relieved, but it is the mean in character, and the ignoble and the dishonorable in life. When therefore the apostle addressed the language of the text to Titus, whom he had left in Crete for the purpose of setting in order the things which were wanting in the church, he referred especially to his conduct. He would say to him, "exhibit such a character, and conduct thyself in such a manner, in all the relations of life, that no one will have reason to despise thee." It is then manifest from this, that a christian young man, educated and introduced into the church by an inspired apostle, may be so far overcome by evil influences, and may so far forget his character and profession, as to do that which deserves to be despised. It will not, therefore, be an expression of a want of confidence in you, my young friends, if I address to you the language of Paul to Titus, and say, "let no man despise you." You will soon engage in the stirring and active duties of life. Your bark you are about to launch on its troublous ocean, and you may need the counsels of the experienced, at the very beginning of the voyage.

As the want of respect, or the contempt which we feel for any one, is the result of his character, or of his conduct as an

expression of it, let me urge you to act towards yourselves, your fellow-men, and your God, in such a manner as that no one will have reason to despise you.

1. In respect to yourselves, there are certain duties, which, if faithfully discharged, no one can despise you. Among these I place *studious habits* and *knowledge*. These two are placed together, because they are intimately united in fact. Much knowledge will not be acquired without studious habits and, with them, a large and increasing fund of knowledge, for the daily uses of life, and the consolation of old age and adversity, is certain. It is presumed that the routine of a college life, with its regularly returning seasons for study, will have formed both the habit and an aptitude for study. If we have failed in this one important part of college training, much has been lost. But habits of study may be lost, after they have been formed, as well as acquired when they do not exist. They should therefore be kept up by constant exercise. The great advantage which an educated man possesses over him whose mind has not been disciplined, consists mainly in the formation of studious habits, and his knowledge of the use of books. By these he is enabled to accomplish, in a few weeks, a literary enterprize which the uneducated could effect only after years of patient and laborious mental discipline. The student, therefore, owes it to himself, to perpetuate and invigorate these habits, to give them depth and compass, so that when an emergency occurs, they may be tasked to accomplish much work. This is readily secured by tasking, every day or every week. The mind, prone to indolence like the body, when necessity is not laid upon it, needs for its well-being that an artificial necessity be created, so that it may be developed in its proper proportions. Habits thus formed, in their proper use are constantly gaining strength, so that the student, who

shall have continued his studious habits, will have laid up for old age, a degree of intellectual power, which will be to him a perpetual source of purest enjoyment. Such a man cannot be despised. One who desires to be distinguished above others, as intelligent, owes it to himself to increase in knowledge. You have learned how to acquire knowledge, and here and there an opening has been made into the vast field of knowledge which lies before you. These will enable you to see something of the extent of the field, and the quality of the treasure to be secured. It is the duty of educated men to cultivate this field. They owe it to themselves and to their country, and to the world and to their God. These treasures were not placed there to be neglected or to be abused. They constitute a part of the exhaustless beneficence of the great God, to be employed for his glory, and for the highest good of mankind. He who possesses the ability to draw out these treasures, and employ them in their legitimate use, and neglects, through indolence, or refuses from a worse motive, deserves to be despised. What ought we think of the physician who professes to cure diseases, whose attainments are endorsed by a medical faculty, and into whose hands, therefore, we confide our dying bodies to be treated, and yet knows but the first principles of his profession, who wastes his time in lounging about the public places of resort, or in the fashionable amusements of the day; who casts aside the experience of the ancients, and the accumulated and recorded wisdom of the moderns, and who relies only upon his own inflated ignorance to aid him in his profession? What estimate are we to form of the counselor who professes to advise the ignorant, as to their rights under the laws of the land, whilst he himself is ignorant of them; who, instead of promoting the peace of the community, himself destroys that peace, and stoops to live upon

the contentions of his fellow-men? What shall we say of the preacher, or divine, who professes to teach the way of salvation, upon which he himself has never walked, and to expound the word of God which he does not understand, and to solve and relieve cases of conscience, when he is ignorant of his own heart, and of the laws and operations of the mind? What shall we say of him, who is fired by an ardent zeal to do good, who professes that it is above all things the desire of his heart to do good, but refuses to endure the labor and anxiety necessary to enable him to gratify his desire, who takes counsel, not of the experienced and learned, but of his own heart, and, throwing books, and study, and learning aside, stands up before the people to preach? These and various other forms of quackery, in the different professions and avocations of life, exemplify the want of knowledge connected with much pretension. Such men we cannot respect. They are much below the honest mechanic, who learns his trade thoroughly, and presents for your necessities or comfort, a perfect piece of workmanship.

You owe it then to yourselves, my young friends, to be thorough in the profession to which you devote yourselves: to bring forth, from day to day, the wisdom of the great men who have passed away; to employ all the knowledge which is now current among men, touching the sphere in which you move, and to elaborate and bring forth that which is new and instructive, as a contribution to swell the general stock of knowledge in the world.

2. You owe it to yourselves to cultivate kind feelings and gentlemanly deportment towards all men. The boorish, the rude and harsh in feeling and manner, and not the kind and gentlemanly, are despised. The cultivation of kind feelings constitutes one of the richest sources of earthly enjoyment.

Our happiness depends but little upon the external circumstances which surround us, and almost entirely upon the state of the affections. If there be peace in the soul, if there be good will to man, if there be a desire to render others happy, and if, in addition, there be supreme love to God, that man is as happy as he can be on earth, and no force of external circumstances can have power to reach or to destroy his happiness. But kind feelings, like sweet flowers, need cultivation. They do not, in most men, spring up spontaneously, neither are they the growth of an hour. The tempers and dispositions of some men seem to be naturally morose, selfish, exclusive and severe, whilst there is a perpetual sunshine beaming upon the hearts of others. Besides, the daily occurrences of life furnish the occasion, if not the excuse for harshness.

Now, every man owes it to himself, as well as to his neighbor, to put the best construction upon the words and actions of others. To subdue bitterness of feeling and vindictiveness, so to have intercourse with his fellow-men, and so to regulate his thoughts and desires as that the law of kindness will reign in his heart and rest upon his tongue. The expression of this kindness is gentlemanly deportment. For true gentility, like true christianity, has its seat in the heart. There is no mistaking the true gentleman, though his manner be embarrassed and his gestures awkward. The proper expression of kindness should also be carefully studied, for an act of kindness bestowed in an ungracious manner, loses half its value. Indeed, kindness of manner in general, is too little studied among us. Its great importance as a sweetener of life's rugged way, is too little considered. How we admire and love a sweet disposition, giving itself expression in words and actions which gush spontaneously from the heart. We exclaim at once, there is one of nature's noblemen. It is impossible to despise such a

man. We could not succeed were we to make the effort. How differently are we affected towards those who exhibit little or no kindness of heart, or manner, who permit a selfish disposition to run to seed, and to multiply itself again and again, who feel no interest in their fellow-men, and manifest no concern for their welfare, and who stand in society as the Upas, unapproached and unapproachable. If we do not despise, we desire to have no intercourse with them. Let me urge you, my young friends, to cultivate the spirit of kindness and a gracious manifestation of it. This will not only protect you against the hostility of others, it will secure their friendship and affection. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

That we may not dwell too long on this part of the subject, we briefly state that no one despises the young man who is pure in heart and life, who is chaste and temperate in all things, who is governed in his intercourse with men by principle and not interest, who is economical without being mean, and liberal without ostentation, who, in one word, is influenced, not by the consideration of how have others acted towards me, or what will the world think of me, but by that other sentiment, more exalted and noble, what is the course of conduct which is due to myself as a rational and immortal being? How shall I best accomplish the end of life, and crown it with glory and honor? Such sentiments cannot fail to secure for their possessor the blessedness of a good conscience, and the approbation of all good men.

3. Let no one despise you in respect to the duties which you owe to others. These may be summed up under the comprehensive law of reciprocity, as taught by reason, or the law of love, as taught by revelation. There are men in the world, who pay no respect to this law, who regard their fellow-men,

not as inheritors with them of the common bounties of God's providence, but as proper subjects of gain, who make the end of life their own gratification, and desire every transaction to contribute to their own advantage, and are dissatisfied unless they make, in all things, the best bargain. For such persons we can entertain very little respect. Certainly, every honest business transaction must be advantageous to both the parties concerned. Wealth, honestly obtained, is that which has been secured by the bestowment of blessings upon others. The profession, or employment, which is sustained by the unrequited labors, or pains, or resources of others, must be sinful before God, and despicable in the sight of men. See to it then, that both your business and your manner of conducting it, be useful to your fellow-men, and that no one can justly charge you with the spirit of selfishness. Our theories of religion and morality are but sealed books, and of no service, except to admire, if we practice not the blessed precepts which they inculcate. But the relations which we sustain to our fellow-men, are not only those of business; they are multiplied and varied, and embrace all the sympathies and affections of our natures. The majority of young men, in setting out in life, may be regarded as poor, unknown, and without influence. Anxious to maintain themselves honestly, and to reflect honor upon their parents, and to secure a good name, they are yet ignorant of a situation adapted to their wants. To them an opportunity of acting out the impulses of their nature, would be not only a source of happiness, it would be the greatest earthly blessing which could be conferred upon them. In no way with which I am acquainted, can men of intelligence, wealth and influence, employ their power more advantageously, for their fellow-men, than in this. They may be said, in this way, to form virtuous character, to increase honest gains, to multiply the

happiness of mankind. For external circumstances contribute largely to the formation of character. If the proper life exist in the young man, if he be anxious to do that which is right, and win a good name amongst his fellow-men, such a situation will furnish the circumstances in which this life will be manifested and developed. With what gratitude do the young, thus directed, regard their benefactors in after life? How vast the benefits which one man may thus confer upon his country and the world. How nobly does he stand before the world as a benefactor of his race. Not obstructing, by such a course, the operations of his own private affairs, but, with them, giving direction to the industry and future capital of hundreds who are needy. If such a course be noble, then stretch out the helping hand to the honest and industrious everywhere, when you have secured influence and power amongst men. Feel that you are interested in everything which belongs to man. Enlarge, in this way, the sphere of your benevolence. As you feel now, when about to enter upon the journey of life, how good it is, or it would be, for some kind friend to open to you a way of usefulness to yourselves and others, be assured that others will thus feel, when you have extended like benevolence to them. Oh! it is the highest form of humanity, thus to enter into the necessities of others, and to direct into the path of honest industry, those who else might have wandered from the path of rectitude. Thus have merchants and mechanics, and professional men, an opportunity of becoming largely benefactors to their race, though their deeds be not recorded by the historian, or sung by the poet.

Disease, in some form, has always attended the human family, and may be regarded, not only as a part of our earthly inheritance, but as ordered by God as a corrective and restraint upon man. In any form, it is painful, and in many exceed-

ingly distressing. Thrown together in society, and dependent upon each other as we are, in all the relations of life, this dependence becomes more striking in sickness. Racked with pain, prostrated in body and mind, oftentimes delirious and completely helpless, no condition in life demands more imperatively our sympathy and assistance. These become more imperative, when the disease is widespread, and has become epidemic; when the fear of death has filled every heart, and the timid, and the selfish, and the wicked flee, regarding, in the common danger, only their own safety. Here duty is plain, but men flee from it. The physician, whose prescriptions and presence then are most needed to cheer and encourage; the divine, whose services are then demanded, as pastor, to comfort the suffering and distressed with the consolations of the gospel, to direct the anxious sinner to the lamb of God, to instruct the ignorant, and to perform the last sad offices to the dead; the nurse, to watch over the suffering patient, whose work is often more important than that of the physician himself, all have left, and the sick die unattended, and the dead lie unburied. How strong and irresistible is the feeling of condemnation against such inhumanity! Can we suppress the feeling of contempt for such persons? True, it may be said there is danger, and self preservation is the first law of our nature. But danger everywhere besets our path, and that nature which teaches such a law, is depraved and fallen, and must yield to that higher law, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," "and as ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Ah, there is a loveliness, a heavenly-mindedness in the self-denial of him who shrinks not from the office of a minister at the bed-side of the suffering, who foregoes the sweets of repose, and exposes himself to disease and death, that he may press the cooling draught to the fevered

lips, and speak a word of encouragement and comfort to the exhausted sufferer. How is our fallen nature dignified when, under the influence of the spirit of christianity, it thus rises and is exalted above itself. We feel that there is a power which can transform the selfish and cowardly into the disinterested and brave. How do we honor the name of Howard, and Florence Nightingale, and others, who have gone out of their appropriate spheres of labor, to minister to the suffering in other countries. And how do we turn away in disgust from those who flee from their own patients and parishioners, and their very relatives, prostrate upon beds of sickness, in the hope of protracting a life which, at longest, must soon end, and which, thus far, may have been unprofitable. My young friends, let no man despise you for want of interest in suffering humanity. Let it not be said that when God's judgments were around you, you fled through fear, and abandoned those whom his providence had committed to your care. A self-denying and self-sacrificing spirit, for the welfare of others and the glory of God, is the highest form of human nature. Thus are we taught by the precepts of him who spake as man never spake, and these precepts are enforced by his own conduct on earth. For he went about doing good, rejecting the luxuries of earth and the praises of men, until the time appointed had arrived, when he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

In this country, which boasts of its freedom, and where every man feels that he is a king, for the people rule, no man ought to be, and few can be, entirely free from the influence of politics. The government of the country, from the nature of the case, interests every one. Not to feel this interest, is to be indifferent to our country. To feel and to act as you ought on this subject, is patriotic. No class of men are more heartily

despised than time servers, whether in politics or religion, and none more richly deserve it. Professed patriots, and therefore disinterested, they covertly seek their own advantage, at the expense of the whole country. With oily tongues and treacherous hearts, they adapt themselves to the company and the occasion, so that they may the more successfully deceive. Ostensibly disciples of temperance, they hold the bottle to their neighbor's mouth, and they themselves partake. Professing christians, they violate the Lord's day, and are profane, to subserve their political ends. With one hand uplifted, they swear to observe the constitution of the United States, whilst the other is open to receive bribes. Truth and falsehood are instruments of equal value, when their own interests can be best subserved by them, and one or the other is employed, as the occasion requires. Let no man despise you in this respect, but discharge with all fidelity, the duty you owe to your country.

Honesty is a cardinal virtue everywhere, but nowhere is it more needed than in the places of political power. The deleterious influence of corruption here, as to its extent and power, no one can compute. From the elevation to which men are here exalted, there is a constant pressure upon the masses below, which they do not find power to resist. The whole body politic is endangered. It is as though the human head were diseased, which gives life and direction to the body. The members may be sound, but they labor under the influence of a diseased head. They may be in a condition to accomplish much, but their ruler and guide, decrepid and disordered, ever leads them astray. The evil effects of such a state of things, is not confined to the administration of the affairs of state, which in itself is sufficiently alarming. It affects society in all its forms, because the power of the government, either di-

rectly or indirectly, transfuses itself into every part of the community. If the political press be corrupt, and strive but for party, if the halls of our national and state legislatures be polluted with bribes, and the contests of party be but for power, then is it high time to turn to the educated youth of the land, and lift a warning voice, for to them will this power soon be entrusted. This country, so highly distinguished in climate, soil, variety of productions and extent of territory, governed in the fear of God, and for the good of all the people, cannot fail to become, not only the greatest on earth, but a blessing to all others. Seek then, with whatever influence you may possess, to make it a praise in all the earth. To this end, be not partisans, but patriots, lovers, not of a party, but of the country, and anxious by concession and compromise to unite more closely, and to benefit the whole. To the strivings and contests of party add not fuel, nor fan the flame, but pour upon them the oil of peaceful and wholesome counsels, and as far as in you lies, cause brethren of the same national household to dwell together in unity. Act from principle, and let that principle be the highest welfare of the whole country. He only is worthy of the protection of his country, and is an honor to it, who labors for her good. Diffuse abroad, as far as you can, intelligence and virtue. Let the cause of education be dear to you. Foster schools and colleges, and be willing to exercise self-denial in their behalf, that these fountains of usefulness may be purified, and the streams which issue from them may be enlarged and multiplied.

4. Discharge the duties which you owe to God in such a manner that no man can despise you. We are naturally and by education religious beings, though in the proper sense of the term, we may not all be christians. Our relations to God, and the duties which grow out of them, do not depend upon

the profession which we may have made, or the obligations which we may have assumed. Nature and reason, as well as revelation, not only teach us the existence and perfections of God, they demand for him the homage of the heart, and the service of the body. These obligations become more tender and, if possible, more imperative, when this great being is revealed to us in human form, and, as the son of God, becoming a sacrifice for our sins, and a mediator between God and man. Besides the natural attributes of his character, which fill the contemplative soul with awe and veneration, his moral attributes challenge, in the highest degree, the affections of the heart. Love, such as the world had never before witnessed, exercised towards enemies, for the purpose of making them friends. Patience and forbearance towards the wayward and erring. Benevolence in supplying returning wants, and mercy exercised, not only in forgiving penitent transgressors, and receiving them into favor, but in continuing and increasing those favors forever. Now, to admire true greatness in man, however manifested, is noble. So is gratitude to a benefactor, and affection to the affectionate, much more is all this due to him from whom all excellency flows, and who is the exhaustless fountain of goodness. On the other hand, there is in man an instinctive contempt for the ungrateful, for the child tenderly reared and fondly cherished, which turns against its parents, and for the citizen who, in the hour of danger, moved by revenge, or filthy lucre, betrays the country which nursed and protected him. From such men we turn away with loathing, and their very names become execrable. What then shall we say of those who dishonor God and reject Christ, who not only resist his will, but ridicule his service and his word. Who, for his mercy, repay hatred, for his benevolence, transgression, for his gracious invitations, contempt, and for the gift of his

son, as the Jews of old, crucifixion. Here imbecility arrays itself against power, folly against wisdom, ignorance against knowledge, and man, the creature, against God, the creator. For such, the time is coming when there will be exercised towards them, by all good beings, the contempt which their wickedness deserves, and they themselves, before an assembled universe, will be filled with shame and everlasting contempt. I trust that not one of you will be amongst this number.

But you profess to be christians, and to receive the word of God as the infallible oracles of truth. God is your God, Christ is your Savior, and the Spirit is your comforter and sanctifier. Be careful then to honor this great being, in whatever sphere of action his providence may call you. Acknowledge him in all your ways, and he will direct your steps. There is much comfort in knowing that God is your friend, in living on intimate terms with him, or, as it is said, "living near to him," in feeling that he is always with you, that he is cognizant of all your acts, and that you are conscious of an all-pervading desire and effort to please him. A profound philosopher and humble christian has recorded, as his conviction, "that, if one train of thinking be more desirable than another, it is that which regards the phenomena of nature with a constant reference to a supreme intelligent author. To have made this the ruling, the habitual sentiment of our minds, is to have laid the foundation of everything which is religious. The world thenceforth becomes a temple, and life itself one continued act of devotion." We would have you go one step farther, and regard all that befalls you as directed and controlled by him, so that prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, life and death, are not only at his disposal, but he directs them for his own glory and the good of his friends. Let your christianity

appear in your life ; in a contented and cheerful disposition, and in an ingenuous and guileless character. Be not afraid to avow yourselves as the followers of Christ, on any proper occasion, and in any company, however wicked. There is a fearful penalty denounced against those who deny the Savior before men. How base too, and ignoble is it, to be ashamed to avow that which is our glory, and to acknowledge him who is our only hope. There are those who, like Esau, will sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, and there are others who are afraid of the face of man, and who, under the shadow of some great name, perhaps wickedly great, will imitate that greatness in cursing God. Walk not in the counsel of such wicked men. Some of you are looking forward to the science of medicine as a field of investigation and labor. Then imitate the great physician who, whilst he healed the body, poured instruction and consolation into the soul. Remember whilst the pulsations of life are beating fewer and more feebly, under your inspection, the unutterable value of an immortal soul. Others, in the courts of justice, will seek to expound the law and the principles of equity, in their relation to particular cases. Beware lest, in your efforts to justify your own client, you condemn the innocent, and the pursuit of justice become the greatest injustice. See to it that you exalt not wickedness, and trample virtue under foot ; and, whilst you maintain that the law cannot be broken with impunity, remember that the law of God is inexorable, and there is a judge who is higher than the highest. Some of you will put forth efforts to educate the youthful mind, to teach it how to originate and arrange ideas, and how to clothe them in appropriate language, and give them intelligible expression in words. Let all their thoughts be directed ultimately to him who is the author of thought, all their minds to the great mind ; and whilst



they are disciplined in the lessons of earthly wisdom, lead them to sit at the feet of the great teacher, to learn the lessons of eternal wisdom. Others are looking forward to the pulpit as the field of life's labor, the noblest and the best, because its results are most beneficial, and its labors are least requited. Let not this blessed work be degraded by ignorance, or indolence, or time-serving, or hypocrisy. There is in the human mind a natural inclination to transfer the contempt which is felt for a person, to the occupation in which he is engaged and the subject on which he is employed. Thus Christ and his gospel have often suffered at the hands of his friends. Let no man despise you, and through you, the ministry and the gospel, but labor to reflect honor upon both. Go then, my young friends, into the several walks of life prepared for you. Quit you like men. Be upright, courageous, humble and persevering, and success must attend your labors. You are not alone in the world. Others are around you engaged in the same conflict. From them you may learn wisdom, and receive encouragement. God is with you, and will bless you, his word will direct, his spirit will comfort, and the Savior will be nigh with sympathising heart, to relieve the necessities of them that love him.